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ABSTRACT

A study examined the value of multiple internships for journalism majors and their effect on three parts of the job search: number of job offers, amount of time spent looking for a job, and starting salary. Questionnaires were mailed to the 233 graduates of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. A total of 112 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 48%. Results indicated that (1) having an internship did not result in a greater number of job offers; (2) the hypothesis that having an internship will lessen the amount of time spent looking for a job was not directly supported, although the more semesters graduates spent interning, the less time they spent looking for employment; and (3) having an internship predicts higher starting salaries. Findings suggest that a college education alone no longer guarantees a job. (Contains 20 references and 16 tables of data.) (RS)

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Chasing the Pot of Gold: Internships on the Road to Employment

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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Chasing the Pot of Gold:
Internships on the Road to Employment:

As you stumble to your desk, a luminescent grin pierces the comforting Monday morning haze. The leering thing in the corner is fresh from tertiary education and wearing a poor approximation of sensible clothes. There is a frantic glint in its eye, warning you that it will spend the rest of the week asking everyone in the office if they need help with that. ...This helper from Hades will be younger than you, less bitter, enduringly enthusiastic and enragingly unlikely to take the full hour for lunch. He may not be able to work your computer system, but he won't tell you until he has lost your most important files. If he is remotely competent, he'll only piss you off. Worst of all, in the most blatant and ingenuous way, he wants your job really badly.[1]

Internship. It is a word that often seems to be ringing continuously in the ears of college journalism students, be it spoken by parents, professors, or career counselors. "You are not going to get a career in journalism without an internship"--if a student has heard it mentioned once, she has probably heard it mentioned a hundred times. As careers in journalism have increasingly become harder to find, internships have come to be more than just another line on a graduate's resume. Having an internship (or better yet, internships) can often mean the difference between getting a job offer and continuing to pound the pavement in search of employment.

Finding the job of one's dreams takes more than just hard work and a thick skin to face an onslaught of rejection letters. Students need to prepare themselves for the marketplace *before* graduation. According to both employers and career counselors, one of the best ways to prepare oneself and gain an edge on the competition is by interning. In this paper I will examine the value of multiple internships for journalism majors and their effect on three parts of the job search: 1) number of job offers; 2) amount of time spent looking for a job; 3) starting salary. Analysis will be based on recent survey data of experiences of graduates of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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[1] Brooks, Elizabeth. 1996. "Helpers from Hell: Internship Programs." New Statesman and Society 9 (No. 389), 9 February, p. 26.

Job Market Tough as Employers Get Choosy

There is no question that the current job market is rough and many salaries reflect this situation, particularly for graduates of journalism and mass communication programs. According to the most recent survey by Michigan State University (Miller, 1996), starting salaries for 1995 journalism graduates rank last at $20,154. These findings are nearly identical to other studies of journalism graduates. Kosicki and Becker (1995) found that the median salary was $20,000 for 1994 journalism bachelor's degree recipients who had a full-time job six to eight months after graduation .

Graduates in 1995-96 face an overall job climate that expects nominal hiring increases, according to the Michigan State study (Ubinas, 1996). But graduates should not get overconfident by this news. It is predicted that 30 percent of students graduating college between the years 1992-2000 will be unable to find college level jobs when they graduate (Wendling, 1996). Many other students will be "educationally underutilized," one of every five college graduates entering the labor force between 1984 and 1990 was under-employed in a job that did not specifically require a college degree (Wilcox, 1994).

Part of the problem graduates face when looking for work is the changing nature of the workplace. Unlike their parents, few recent graduates will be hired out of school and remain with a single employer until they retire. Jobs are now becoming much more mobile as workers can expect to change employers several times during their working life. Graduates also face increased competition from experienced and older workers who are the victims of corporate downsizing, as well as past graduates who are still looking for work (Coolidge, 1995). All of this gives employers the opportunity to be even choosier about whom they hire.

Interning Paying Off for Grads and Employers

According to the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education (NSIEE), an internship is "any carefully monitored work or service experience in which an

individual has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what he or she is learning through the experience" (Gilbert, 1995). What that definition does not include, however, is that interning can very often pay off by leading to full-time employment. Twenty-six percent of all graduates hired in 1993 came from internships or cooperative education programs, an increase from 17 percent in 1993 (Wilcox, 1994). The College Board reported that employers hire 80 percent of their interns as permanent employees after graduation (Lum, 1994). Many employers are also starting to bypass campus recruiting and hire exclusively from their pool of interns or co-op students (Wilcox, 1994).

By hiring interns companies can substantially reduce--if not eliminate--the time-consuming and expensive recruiting for entry level positions. Not only has the recruiting already been done, but employers have enough experience with their interns to know who will work out in the long term (Farinelli and Mann, 1994). Personnel directors have come to describe their group of interns as their "bull-pen" in which each intern goes through an unofficial probationary period to assess their merits for future employment (Oldman and Hamadeh, 1996). Rathke (1996) has noticed that hiring from intern pools has become more prevalent at advertising agencies and expects it to spread into other fields:

> As the emphasis on internships has increased, companies are now looking more and more to those people as a low-risk group from which to hire. Assuming that works out well for the companies, I would assume that the emphasis on internships will get even greater--not just in the big cities, but everywhere. And if it's happening in advertising, it will be happening in other areas as well (p. 1).

It is clear that students are paying attention to these changing hiring practices as more students intern before graduation. The National Association of Colleges and Employers found that nearly 59 percent of all entry-level graduates hired in 1995 had field work or internship experience (Kaslow, 1996). This is nothing new to journalism majors who have long understood internships to be an important part of their undergraduate

experience. Every year since 1987 nearly 80 percent of journalism graduates have reported that they had an internship while in school (Kosicki & Becker, 1995).

If they have not already done so, most employers are beginning to seriously think about their intern programs and how valuable they can be. The recession of the early 1990's saw the beginning of paid and unpaid interns being used by companies as a form of inexpensive labor (Rigdon, 1991; Tooley, 1991). With more companies now hiring from within their intern ranks, employers are being both more selective of the interns they choose, but also offering more worthwhile internship experiences. The internship program at the computer giant Microsoft gives college students more perks than they may have at their eventual full-time job, including flexible hours, casual dress, subsidized housing, round-trip travel to Redmond, WA--all on top of a salary between $320-$480 per week (Coolidge, 1994).

Are perks like those at Microsoft the way good internships are measured? Oldman and Hamadeh (1996) have a short list of criteria that put some internships ahead of the rest. The first is that an internship should offer its participants "substantive, challenging work," rather than days filled with busywork at the photocopier. The second criterion is that they allow behind-the-scenes exposure and networking. Finally, the internship should offer some financial compensation. Unfortunately most internships in the news media do not fall within these parameters (Rowe, 1991).

Qualifications Beyond Internships

While journalism students realize that internships can be a crucial element in getting hired, they are also pursuing other ways for attracting the attention of employers. One of these ways is by double-majoring or attaining a certificate in a non-communication field. The double major can be an advantage as companies are looking for people who can apply "soft" skills along with technical skills (Johnson, 1996). Journalism majors may also choose to complete additional sequences within journalism, such as combining print and

broadcasting, or public relations with advertising. Kosicki and Becker (1995) have found that interest in advertising and public relations has dropped slightly in recent years, while interest in more traditional print journalism and broadcasting has grown.

If students are unable to find an internship they can usually find experience at school working on various campus media. While most positions at campus media are unpaid, students do have an opportunity to work their way up to editor and other supervisory positions--all of which can be very impressive to employers. One-third of all journalism bachelor's degree graduates in 1994 worked for their campus newspaper (Kosicki & Becker, 1995).

While working at a particularly good internship can be beneficial to students, many employers are now expecting students to have a variety of internship experiences (Rigdon, 1993). Many students now start looking around for internships as early as their freshman year, knowing that competition for getting an internship--even unpaid ones--can be as fierce as the competition for a "real" job (Bounds, 1994). Minority students are particularly aware of the value of internships. Hanigan Consulting found that 75 percent of minority students participated in internship programs, compared to only 66 percent of white students (Wynter, 1994).

Research Hypotheses

These findings and statistics indicate that employment for journalism graduates may well hinge on having one or more internships, as well as participating in several of the other activities mentioned above that will help them to stand out from the other job applicants. As such, the following predictions are made:

H1: The greater the number of internships, the greater the number of job offers the graduate will receive.

H2: The greater the number of internships, the less amount of time the graduate will spend looking for a job.

H3: The greater the number of internship, the greater the starting salary of the graduate.

Methods

Questionnaires were mailed to the 233 1993-94 BA/BS graduates of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Their names were provided by the registrar's office. One hundred and twelve responded, yielding a 48% return rate. The questionnaire asked about the graduates' experiences both while a student and in the months since graduation. Included were questions about university experiences, job-seeking and employment, and salary. The questionnaire was nearly identical to the one used by Professors Kosicki and Becker of the School of Journalism at The Ohio State University in their annual survey of graduates of U.S. journalism and mass communication programs.

There are three dependent variables: **number of job offers**; **length to find a job** (measured in months, this is based on subtracting the respondent's date of graduation from the starting date at work with their primary employer); **income** (starting weekly salary before taxes).

There are three demographic control variables: **journalism sequence** (advertising, news-editorial, public relations, broadcast news, mass communication); **grade point average** (an eight-point scale from "A" to "below a C"); **gender**.

There are six independent variables: **internship** (having had a media-related internship while in college); **college publication** (having worked for a college publication or other campus media while in college); **number of semesters** (having an internship or working for a campus media); **prior work** (having worked for or interned with employer before being hired); **second major** (in an academic field other than communications); **certificate** (earning a certificate in another academic area).

Results

Control Variables: Ninety-three percent of the respondents received Bachelor of Arts degrees and seven percent received Bachelor of Science degrees. Women made up 75.9 percent of the survey respondents. Members of racial or ethnic minorities made up 4.5 percent of the sample

A breakdown by area of specialization reveals that advertising was the most popular sequence, chosen by 48.2 percent of the respondents, while mass communication was the least popular sequence, chosen by only 12.5 percent of the respondents (Table 1). These percentages add to more than 100 percent because half of all respondents specialized in more than one concentration.

Do men and women select the same sequences? There is a slightly higher percentage of men in the news-editorial and public relations sequences, and slightly more women than men in the broadcast sequence (Table 2). Percentages again add up to greater than 100 percent because of double sequences.

The most popular combination of sequences was advertising and public relations, selected by 28.6 percent of the respondents who specialized in two or more sequences (Table 3). Three respondents specialized in three sequences, and one person specialized in four sequences.

Respondents reported graduating with impressive grade point averages: over 44 percent reported attaining a GPA of 3.4 or higher (Table 4). A large majority of respondents (77 percent) reported that the their job involves communication activities and skills related to their area of study in college.

Independent Variables: Respondents worked for many different college publications and media, some students working for more than one. Sixty-eight percent reported working for a college publication, the most popular choice was working on a student newspaper (Table 5).

Media-related internships were much more popular than working on college publications. Eighty-three percent reported that they had an internship while in college, the most popular choices being advertising and public relations internships (Table 6).

Students reported working on a campus medium or interning an average of 3.26 semesters (standard deviation of 2.67). Thirteen percent of respondents reported that they had neither worked on a campus medium nor interned (Table 7).

Forty-two percent of the respondents completed a second major. The most popular second major was in a foreign language (Table 8). Seventeen percent of the respondents earned a certificate (Table 9).

Dependent Variables: Of those journalism graduates who have looked for work, 42 percent received at least one or two job offers since graduation. The average number of job offers was 1.6 (Table 10).

Within six months of graduation 84 percent of the respondents reported that they had found either full or part-time work. Ninety-eight percent had found jobs within one year of graduation. Excluding those respondents who found jobs prior to graduation, the average length of time to find the first job was 4.5 months. However, the mean drops to 2.8 months when those respondents who found jobs prior to graduation are included (table 11).

The mean weekly salary of respondents is $343. Reported salaries ranged from a low of $100 per week to a high of $680 per week (Table 12). There is a $31 difference (although not statistically significant) in the mean income between male graduates ($367) and female graduates ($336). Advertising majors had the highest mean income ($384), while mass communication majors had the lowest ($254) (Table 13).

Hypotheses Testing: There are no significant correlations between any of the control variables and the number of job offers a graduate receives or the length of time needed to find a job (Table 14). However there are two interesting findings regarding the five journalism sequence variables and income. There is a significant, positive correlation

between graduates in the advertising sequence and their starting salary ($r=.36$, $p \leq .01$). However there is a significant, negative correlation between graduates in the mass communication sequence and their starting salary ($r=-.28$, $p \leq .01$). Graduates who have worked on a college publication or other media take less time to find a job than those graduates who did not work for a college publication or other media ($r=-.22$, $p \leq .05$). Students who graduated with a certificate get fewer job offers ($r=-.22$, $p \leq .05$) and take longer to find employment ($r=.26$, $p \leq .05$). Graduates who had worked or interned with their employer prior to being hired have higher starting salaries than those without prior work or internship experience.

Which variables, if any, predict to a student having an internship? Students appear to attain internships uniformly, without regard to their choice of journalism sequences (Table 15). Students with higher grade point averages do not have any more internships than students with lower GPAs. There are also no correlations between internships and having a second major, or acquiring a certificate. Both women and men participate in internships equally.

The hypothesis that having an internship predicts to a greater number of job offers (**H1**) is not supported (Table 16). Regression analysis indicates that after controls there are two negative predictors to the number of job offers, having a second major ($b=-.20$, $p \leq .10$) and attaining a certificate ($b=-.19$, $p \leq .10$). Graduates who spend less time looking for employment have many job offers ($b=-.32$, $p \leq .05$), as do graduates with high starting salaries ($b=.31$, $p \leq .05$).

The hypothesis that having an internship will lessen the amount of time spent looking for a job (**H2**) is also not directly supported (Table 16). However, graduates who have worked for a college publication or other media spend less time looking for employment ($b=-.28$, $p \leq .05$), as do graduates who spent multiple semesters working for a college publication or interning ($b=-.25$, $p \leq .10$). Graduates who have a certificate

spend a longer amount of time looking for employment (b=.30, $p \leq .05$). Graduates with more job offers spend less time looking for work (b=-.32, $p \leq .01$).

The hypothesis that having an internship will increase a graduates starting salary (**H3**) is supported (Table 16). Having an internship (b=.23, $p \leq .01$), as well as working on a college publication or other media (b=.28, $p \leq .01$), predicts to income after controls. However, prior work (b=.33, $p \leq .01$) continues to remain a strong predictor, even after controls. Graduates with many job offers also have higher starting salaries (b=.22, $p \leq .05$).

Discussion

Job Offers: This analysis sheds little light on the question of which variables predict to the number of job offers a graduate receives. While the literature emphasizes that students need to be well-rounded with more than just technical skills (Johnson, 1996), graduates who have made the extra effort for a double major or certificate received fewer job offers than their peers. Further research must more closely examine the types of job offers they do receive. Perhaps these students are looked highly upon by employers and receive one great job offer that is accepted. These graduates may also be more sure of their career objectives (journalism with a foreign language was the most frequent of the double majors) and be more selective of which companies they target.

Length of Time to Find Work: The hypothesis that an internship would decrease the amount of time spent looking for work (**H2**) was not supported directly. However, results do indicate that the more semesters graduates spent interning (or working for a college publication or other media), the less time they spend looking for employment. This appears to support the literature that says employees expect graduates to not just have *a* internship, but to have *multiple* internships (Rigdon, 1993). Employers can afford to be choosy as the number of job applicants increase. If multiple internships are the real key to employment, then students who start their internship experiences earlier in their academic

career (and thus have more semesters available to participate in more internships) may have an advantage over the competition.

Starting Salary: Somehow all roads--or at least the annual employment surveys--eventually turn to salaries. While journalism graduates may find some solace that the average starting salary for 1994 graduates was $1,500 higher than the year before (Kosicki & Becker, 1995), salaries for journalism graduates are still ranked last behind 27 other majors (Miller, 1996). This analysis does support the hypothesis (H3) that having an internship does predict to higher starting salaries. Yet working for a college publication or other college media is nearly as strong a predictor of higher income as having an internship. However, this may not necessarily mean that each experience is interchangeable with the other. It may be instead that career-minded journalism majors do both activities--interning and working for a college publication. Rather than be interchangeable, the two experiences are more likely complementary. Students also need to begin planning their career well in advance of graduation. Interning or working part-time at their eventual employer is the strongest predictor of high starting salary. Unfortunately for journalism majors this usually means accepting an unpaid internship (Rowe, 1991). However, these results indicate that months of unpaid labor can pay off--literally--with a higher starting salary. These findings also support the literature that indicates employers are hiring from within their intern pool (Rathke, 1996).

What's Next?: These results seem to indicate that a college education alone no longer guarantees one a job--not that it ever really did. In a period of corporate downsizing and changing economics, the pressure is on journalism students to plan often and ahead. Students who are seeking the top jobs need to start looking for internships earlier than ever, even starting in their freshman year for competitive programs. Internships do pay off with higher starting salaries. The pressure is also on journalism advisors and career counselors to help their students become aware of the importance of internships, as well as helping them find intern positions.

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Table 1
Journalism Sequence

Advertising	48.2%
News-Editorial	42.0%
Public Relations	34.8%
Broadcast News	7.9%
Mass Communication	12.5%

Table 2
Gender and Sequence

	Male	Female
News-Editorial	54.2%	40.0%
Broadcast	14.8%	18.8%
Advertising	50.0%	49.4%
Public Relations	41.7%	34.1%
Mass Communication	12.5%	12.9%
	(27)	(85)

Table 3
Combinations of Sequences

Advertising and Public Relations	28.6%
News-Editorial and Public Relations	17.8%
Public Relations and Broadcast	12.5%
Advertising and News-Editorial	10.7%
Advertising and Mass Comm.	10.7%
Advertising and Broadcast	5.3%
News-Editorial and Broadcast	3.6%
News-Editorial and PR and MC	3.6%
News-Editorial and Mass Comm.	1.8%
Broadcast and Mass Comm.	1.8%
News-Editorial and Adv. and PR	1.8%
News-Ed. and Adv. and PR and MC	1.8%
	(56)

Table 4
Grade Point Average

A (4.0-3.8)	8.0%
A- (3.7-3.4)	36.6%
B+ (3.3-3.1)	33.9%
B (3.0-2.8)	16.1%
B- (2.7-2.4)	5.4%
	(112)

Table 5
Worked for College Publication

Newspaper	58.0%
Radio Station	11.6%
TV Station	11.6%
Any Other Media	8.9%
Yearbook	5.4%
No College Media	31.3%

Table 6
Media-Related Internship

Public Relations	28.6%
Advertising	24.1%
Other Media	20.5%
TV Station	18.8%
Newspaper	15.2%
Radio Station	8.9%
Magazine	7.1%
No Internship	16.1%

Table 7
Number of Semesters Working Or Interning for Campus Media

0 Semesters	13.4%
1 Semesters	14.3%
2 Semesters	14.3%
3 Semesters	20.5%
3.5 Semesters	1.8%
4 Semesters	9.8%
5 Semesters	7.1%
6 Semesters	9.8%
7 Semesters	3.6%
8 Semesters	0.9%
9 Semesters	0.9%
10 Semesters	0.9%
11 Semesters	1.8%
15 Semesters	0.9%
	(112)

Table 8
Second Major

Foreign Language	8.9%
Other	8.0%
Political Science	6.3%
History	6.3%
Comm. Arts	6.3%
English	3.6%
Psychology	2.7%
Sociology	0.9%
No Second Major	57.2%
	(112)

Table 9
Certificate Earned

Integrated Liberal Studies	3.6%
Environmental Studies	2.7%
Women's Studies	2.7%
Criminal Justice	0.9%
Other	7.1%
	(112)

Table 10
Since Graduation, Number of Job Offers

No Offers	31.0%
One Offer	22.6%
Two Offers	20.2%
Three Offers	17.9%
Four Offers	3.6%
Five Offers	1.2%
Six Offers	1.2%
Seven Offers	1.2%
Ten Offers	1.2%
	(84)

Table 11
Length of Time to Find First Job

Upon Graduation Or Prior to	12.1%	10 Months	1.1%
		11 Months	2.2%
One Month	13.1%	12 Months	1.1%
Two Months	15.4%	15 Months	1.1%
Three Months	9.9%		(91)
Four Months	7.7%		
Five Months	12.1%		
Six Months	14.3%		
Seven Months	7.7%		
Eight Months	1.1%		
Nine Months	1.1%		

Table 12
Weekly Salary Before Taxes

Below $300 per week	36.0%
$300-$399 per week	28.0%
$400-$499 per week	25.9%
$500 and Above per week	10.1%
	(89)

Table 13
Mean Salary by Journalism Sequence

Advertising	$384.48
Public Relations	$354.62
News-Editorial	$324.40
Broadcast	$319.64
Mass Communication	$254.04

Table 14
Zero-Order Correlations Among Dependent and Independent Variables

	Number of Job Offers	Length to Find Job	Income
News-Ed.	-.10	.07	-.13
Broadcasting	.10	.01	-.15
Advertising	.03	-.11	.36**
Public Relations	-.14	.04	.08
Mass Comm.	-.01	-.01	-.28**
GPA	.10	.08	.13
Gender (female)	-.07	-.01	-.10
Internship	.02	-.12	.20
College Media	.06	-.22*	.11
# of Semesters	.07	-.18	.03
Prior Work	-.06	-.09	.34**
Second Major	-.10	.04	.01
Certificate	-.22*	.26*	-.05
Number of Job Offers	-----	-.35**	.25*
Length to Find Job	-.35**	-----	-.12
Income	.25*	-.35**	-----

N = 112 ** = $p \leq .01$ (two-tailed test) * = $p \leq .05$ (two-tailed test)
Figures shown are Pearson correlation coefficients (r) before any controls.

Table 15
Antecedents to Interning

	Internship
News-Ed.	-.04
Broadcasting	.04
Advertising	.03
Public Relations	.09
Mass Communication	-.10
GPA	.09
Gender (female)	.07
Second Major	.09
Certificate	.08

N = 112 ** = $p \leq .01$ (two-tailed test) * = $p \leq .05$ (two-tailed test)
Figures shown are Pearson correlation coefficients (r) before any controls.

Table 16

Multiple Regression: Predicting Income, Length of Time to Find Work, and Number of Job Offers

	Number of Job Offers	Length to Find Job	Income
Block 1			
News-Ed.	-.29#	-.07	-.07
Broadcasting	-.07	-.01	-.10
Advertising	-.12	-.19	.21
Public Relations	-.15	.06	.09
Mass Comm.	-.03	.01	-.34**
GPA	.23#	.04	.26*
Gender (female)	-.21#	-.13	-.09
Incremental R2	12.15%	3.56%	24.55%**
Block 2			
Internship	.03	-.17	.23*
College Media	.06	-.28*	.28*
# of Semesters	.13	-.25#	.18
Prior Work	.01	-.02	.33**
Second Major	-.20#	.04	-.10
Certificate	-.19#	.30*	-.10
Incremental R2	9.77%	17.34%	19.21%**
Block 3			
Number of Job Offers	-----	-.32**	.22*
Length to Find Job	-.32*	-----	-.01
Income	.31*	-.01	-----
Incremental R2	13.57%*	8.83%#	4.25%**

N = 112 ** = $p \leq .01$ (two-tailed test) * = $p \leq .05$ # = $p < .10$

Figures in Block 1 are standardized beta coefficients before any controls. Block 2 figures are standardized beta coefficients (before entry) after controls for the seven variables in Block 1. Block 3 figures are standardized beta coefficients (before entry) after controls for the variables in both Block 1 and Block 2.